DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 190 535 SP 016 460

AUTHOR Wolff, Diana E.; Gutierrez, Dru Ann
TITLE The Group Interview: A Predictor of Success in a Teacher Training Program.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 10p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Communication Skills; *Evaluation Methods; Field Experience Programs; *Group Dynamics; Interaction; *Interpersonal Competence; *Interviews; Leadership Qualities; *Student Evaluation; Student Teaching; Teacher Education

ABSTRACT

A description is given of a group interview process used with candidates for a nine month, field-based teacher training program. Five candidates were interviewed together by several faculty observers in a forty-five minute session. Faculty observed and noted leadership skills, verbalization and sharing of ideas, ability to convince others, acceptance of other's contributions, and skills in summarizing and synthesizing. Also noted were personal characteristics. It was felt that more information on the students' potential for success in student teaching could be obtained in this format than in an individual interview format. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED190535

THE GROUP INTERVIEW: A PREDICTOR OF SUCCESS IN A TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM

by

Diana E. Wolff, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor and Field Site Coordinator
California State University, Dominguez Hills
School of Education
1000 E. Victoria Street
Carson, California 90747
213-515-3522 (CSUDH) and 213-373-3161 (home)

Diana Wolff has her doctorate in Special Education and is the author of THE SUB-SAVER: A HANDBOOK AND GUIDE FOR ELEMENTARY SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS, Teachers Press, Orange, Ca. 1976.

and

Dru Ann Gutierrez, M.A.
Assistant Professor and Field Site Coordinator
California State University, Dominguez Hills
School of Education
1000 E. Victoria Street
Carson, California 90747
213-515-3522 (CSUDH) and 213-380-7707 (home)

Dru Ann Gutierrez is a doctoral candidate in Teacher Education at Claremont Graduate School and is co-author of the Social Studies Series WHAT IS MAN? Franklin Publishers.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Diana Wolff

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SP 016 460

ABSTRACT: The Group Interview: A Predictor of Success in a Teacher Training Program

by: Diana E. Wolff, Ed.D. and Dru Ann Gutierrez, M.A.

Individual interviews took too long and interview scores did not correlate well with success in a nine month, field-based, teacher training program. Therefore, a group interview process was instituted which identifies group interaction skills necessary to successful teaching and appears to be a good predictor of success in the program.

It has always been the policy at California State University, Dominguez Hills, to interview all appli cants to the nine month, field-based, teacher training program before acceptance. Two or three faculty members from the School of Education interviewed each candidate for approximately twenty minutes. The candidates were questioned about their background and experience, their reasons for wanting to be a teacher, for choosing this particular program, their philosophy of education and their alternative plans should they not be accepted into the program. The interview tended to be a stressful experience for the candidates, but faculty felt that teaching is sometimes stressful and that it might be productive to observe candidates functioning in a stressful situation.

Inter-rater reliability was, at best, relatively poor. Those faculty who were directly involved in the supervision of the student teachers (the field site coordinators) were more able to identify candidates who were not likely to be successful in the program. As an outcome, only site coordinators conducted the interviews.

While the interview did appear to cut down the number of students who did not succeed in the program, there was feeling that far too many students still did not possess the needed personal skills for a successful student teaching experience. The process took up an inordinate amount of the faculty's time, produced stress for the candidate, and yielded no information about group interaction skills, assertiveness, flexibility, leadership qualities, or indeed, anything other than an individual's ability to answer questions

under pressure.

A perusal of the literature indicates that little, if any, attention has been paid to the interview process as part of pre-service selection. Very few studies have attempted to isolate successful teaching behaviors, and these have not identified group interaction skills, or have they been at the pre-service level. Yet these same group interaction skills are the ones that allow teachers to work effectively with groups of students and with their adult peers.

Because the faculty had a firm commitment to the interview process, it was decided to experiment by interviewing prospective candidates in a group. It was hoped that the information that they could receive about each candidate would be greater than that which could be obtained in an individual interview. It would certainly take less time.

The following format was chosen. Five candidates would be interviewed at one time in a forty-five minute time period. Upon arrival, the candidates would fill out an interview summary that contained information about degree earned, pre-requisite course completion, and a brief summary of their previous experiences in working with children. The candidates would then be ushered into a conference room, seated at a large table, and introduced to the two or three faculty members who were conducting the interview. The information sheets would be collected and quickly reviewed to confirm each candidate's eligibility to enter the program. By way of introduction, the applicants were then asked to tell the group one or two things about themselves. At this time, the

interviewers would be evaluating each candidate's verbal and articulation skills.

This completed, the applicants would then be provided with a copy of the time and preparation requirements of the program, and questions they had about the program would be answered at this time. They would be asked to sign the requirement sheet to indicate their understanding and acceptance of program requirements. At this point, they would then be asked to write a paragraph indicating why they wanted to be a teacher and to respond to the question "What is teaching?" These responses would later be read and evaluated for clarity of thought, spelling, grammar and punctuation. It was at this point in the interview that the candidates would be engaged in a group task.

Their task was to choose one of their group to act as a recorder, and then, to generate as a group, a list of all the aspects of the educational process that they felt were important, other than curriculum matters, such as reading and math. The interviewers were non-judgemental observers. When the group had run out of ideas, or fifteen minutes had passed, whichever occurred first, they would be asked to prioritize their list by assigning a number "1" to the item that they felt was most important, a number "2" to the second most important, and a "3" to the third. These items were then read to the interviewers by the recorder, collected and identified by day, time and candidates' names, and then placed in a folder for later review. At termination of the interview each candidate would be asked to comment on his reactions to the group interview process.

During the group task, the interviewers were observing and tallying the frequency of each candidate's offering of suggestions and ideas. The following qualities were observed and noted: leadership skills, verbalization and sharing of ideas, ability to convince others, acceptance of other's contributions, and skills in summarizing and synthesizing. Also noted were enthusiam, assertiveness, flexibility, and aggressive and passive behavior.

As this group interview process was put into practice, it soon became apparent to the faculty interviewers that they were indeed getting significantly more information about each candidate than in previous individual interviews. Five candidates could be interviewed in less time than it had previously taken to interview three candidates. The process worked well. It would remain to be seen whether the interview scores would correlate highly with successful completion of student teaching.

Most interesting to the faculty involved were the applicants' responses regarding their reactions to the group interview process. Almost invariably, the candidates were enthusiastic. Many identified the kinds of skills that were observable in the process. Some of their comments indicated that they felt less anxious, less threatened, more stimulated and found that the ideas of the group helped to free their own thinking and productivity. In addition, they felt a warm camaraderie towards their group, especially if they were acquainted with others from previous course work. Several commented that the group task was similar to the kinds of things they would be doing in the

classroom(e.g. helping children to generate ideas, questioning them to clarify ideas, helping them to summarize ideas, etc.). None of the candidates had ever been in a group interview before, but almost all appreciated the relaxed atmosphere, expressed their feelings of success, and appeared to enjoy their experience.

To date, over one hundred candidates have gone through the group interview process, and only two have verbalized dissatisfaction. Both of those candidates were observed to be non-assertive during the group task, contributed very little, and appeared to lack verbal skills.

There is, of course, an appeal process, for those who feel that they have not been adequately served by the group interview. They may request, and will receive, a second individual or group interview.

The initial group to go through the group interview process is now almost halfway through their student teaching experience. The site coordinators report that they are meeting success in student teaching.

At this stage it is too soon to tell whether there will be a high correlation between the interview scores and success in the teacher training program at California State University, Dominguez Hills. Nevertheless, by December 1980, when the first group has completed the program, it will be possible to make specific statements about the group interview process as a predictor of success. Follow up studies on how well these student teachers succeed in later teaching positions should yield some conclusive data.

One point appears to be true at this juncture, and that is that the group interview process does seem to enable those who enter the training program to feel a part of a group with similar goals...that of becoming a competent teacher. Site coordinators report that this feeling appears to carry over to the field site group they later join. The students are thus enabled, at the beginning of their training program, to view their peers as a supportive body with which to work and with whom to learn. For a nine month, field-based teacher training program, this must be viewed as a big plus for the group interview process.

GROUP INTERVIEW SCORE SHEET

Name_____ Date_____ Interviewer_____

Average score_____ 1 = low, 3 = average, 5 = high

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Ability to communicate ideas effectively					
a. verbal					
b. written					
2. Speech Articulation (clarity, voice projection, animation, etc.)					
3. Positive Assertiveness (eye contact, ability to convince others, but not aggressive)					
4. Flexibility (willing to listen and accept other's ideas, tolorance of ambiguity, open-mindedness, etc.)					
5. Presentable Appearance (neat attire)					
6. Enthusiasm (towards task at hand, education in general)					

Comments:_____